

DISSECTING THE BUSH DOCTRINE

U.S.
Imperialism's
Crusade
for
One
World
Empire

By Raymond Lotta

people of the world. Right now our focus must be to stop a cruel and unjust war in the making against Iraq. The challenges are enormous. But people must rise to them, because what is ultimately at stake is the kind of world we are going to live in: a world of empire, or a world free of exploitation and domination.

Revolutionary Worker #1187, February 16, 2003,
posted at rwor.org

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Dissecting the Bush Doctrine U.S. Imperialism's Crusade for One World Empire

by Raymond Lotta

Note: The following article is based on talks and speeches given at antiwar teach-ins and seminars.

Why is the U.S. launching war against Iraq? What is driving the onslaught against this impoverished, decimated country?

Behind the pretexes, lies, and pious rhetoric is cruel logic at work. The war on Iraq is the second phase of what can only be described as America's war on the world.

Think of what has happened since the events of 9/11. The U.S. conducted a brutal war against Afghanistan that took more lives than were lost at the World Trade towers. By early 2002, the U.S. had sent troops into the Philippines, into Yemen, and Somalia. It had set up 13 new military bases in the oil-rich and gas-rich countries surrounding Afghanistan. And it had embarked on the biggest military build-up since the cold-war years of the Reagan administration.

U.S. policy planners and strategists have spoken of a

"war without boundaries." They tell us it will be a new kind of war – with new military doctrine and tactics. Vice-President Cheney tells us this war may last a generation – an "endless war." The joint chiefs of staff have quietly adopted a 20- to 30-year military plan for waging warfare against different states and armed groups across the world. In March of 2002, the administration announced that it was prepared to use tactical nuclear weapons in first strikes.

This "permanent war" has a home front. Again, think about what has happened since 9/11: round-ups and detentions of targeted sections of immigrants, the vast expansion of police and surveillance powers, the creation of military tribunals, and a pervasive Big Brother atmosphere.

The government says this is all about preventing new outbreaks of terrorism – that it's about our security, about democracy, about the preservation of civilization (as they define it). But what's really going on is something else, and it is further and further removed from the events of 9/11. What's going on is about the needs of empire – the U.S. empire.

Now when I say that the U.S. is an empire, I mean that the economy of the U.S. is the "home base" of a global network of exploitation and plunder. This

tries and already fragile regimes into the madness of the "war on terrorism." It is intensifying tensions and instabilities in the Middle East...on the Indian subcontinent...on the Korean peninsula. America's new hegemonism is shaking alliances in Europe and elsewhere. Other imperialist powers are being compelled to stake out their claims and fight for their great-power interests in a more uncertain international arena. This war on the world is dragging people in the imperialist countries into political life – with literally millions taking to the streets. U.S. intervention and war in the Middle East have the potential to ignite firestorms of resistance and upheaval that could rock and topple regimes in the region.

Bob Avakian describes this situation as a "cauldron of contradictions." In this context, he points out: "the alignment that [the U.S. imperialists] are trying to bring into being, and even the alignment that now exists, is not the only way things can turn out." The people must work to bring about a different alignment, one that can stop this juggernaut and advance the struggle against the system.

Here in the U.S., the antiwar movement is developing. Growing numbers are taking up the task of organizing powerful resistance to this juggernaut of war and repression, and making common cause with the

exploitation of hundreds of millions of laborers throughout the world.

The Bush team sees a window of opportunity in the world situation to pursue its agenda. They also see a necessity to move decisively. In their own perverted way, they have a sense of history, of rising and declining empires.

The U.S. emerged from World War 2 with unparalleled strength. By the 1960s, a storm of national liberation struggles in the Third World – supported by Maoist China – challenged U.S. neocolonialism. By the early 1970s, the U.S. was facing its first military defeat, at the hands of the Vietnamese people, and being challenged on a world scale by a superpower rival, the Soviet Union. Japan was the rising economic power of the world system. In the 1990s, the Soviet Union had collapsed, Japan was fading economically, and the European Union had emerged as a formidable economic power. The distribution of power in the world imperialist system has changed dramatically over the last 40 years. The U.S. imperialists are acutely aware of this.

U.S. imperialism has considerable initiative right now. But their global juggernaut is fraught with complex and dangerous contradictions. It is forcing many coun-

empire is bound together by over \$5 trillion in overseas investments. It spreads its tentacles of influence and control through global institutions like the IMF, World Bank, and WTO that the U.S. dominates. This empire subordinates oppressed nations of the Third World to its economic needs and strategic interests, and enforces that subordination through the controlling mechanism of the neocolonial state.

This is a capitalist-imperialist empire. It operates according to the imperatives of economic expansion, the pressures of competition, and the drive among contending world powers for strategic position and advantage – over regions, markets, and resources. And this empire rests on military might. U.S. imperialism has girdled the globe with more than 700 military bases and installations; stations over a half-million troops overseas; and has constructed a high-tech military machine that has rained death and destruction on more people of the world than has any other power of the last 60 years. The rulers of the U.S. empire are now on a predatory offensive.

Bob Avakian, whose insightful analysis of the current situation I am drawing on, describes the Bush administration's strategic perspective this way: "They have ambitions of essentially reshuffling the whole deck, reordering the whole situation – beginning with the

strategic areas of central and south Asia and the Middle East that are more immediately involved now – but, even beyond that, on a world scale” (see *The New Situation and the Great Challenges* – RW special magazine section in RW #1143 [March 17, 2002] and at rwor.org).

The essence of what is happening is this: *under the cloak of the war on terrorism, U.S. imperialism is seeking to achieve world domination on a whole new level.* This is the “dirty little secret” of the “war on terrorism.” This “war on terrorism” is being used as a blank check to attack any opponent the U.S. imperialists choose, including genuine revolutionary movements such as the Maoist people’s wars in Nepal and the Philippines. The “war on terrorism” is a political-military-ideological offensive to accomplish many different things in pursuit of empire. It is extreme and dangerous in its methods and goals.

A GRAND STRATEGY FOR EMPIRE

In this article, I want to explore the nature and underlying objectives of the Bush Doctrine. These are some of the main points I will be making:

America’s most trusted ally in the Middle East. It would provide Israel with a more favorable regional framework within which to suppress Palestinian resistance and fortify occupation and control.

Finally, a successful war against Iraq would be a demonstration of brute power. It would show allies and foes alike what happens when a regime defies the new Roman Empire. It would serve as a precedent for preemptive military strikes in other parts of the world. In these ways, the ouster of Saddam Hussein bolsters the U.S.’s regional and world agenda.

A CAULDRON OF CONTRADICTIONS, A RESPONSIBILITY TO ACT

Let me sum up. Under the banner of the “war on terrorism,” U.S. imperialism is utilizing its political, military, and economic strengths to restructure relations in key regions of the world and to entrench and fortify its position as the hegemonic power over the world economy and the international state system. U.S. imperialism is widening its military superiority. It is seeking to secure monopolistic control over the world’s sources of oil – in the Persian Gulf, Caspian Sea, and the South China Sea. It is seeking more privileged access to markets and raw materials. This is a quest to create the conditions for the unchallenged

hamper Russia from pursuing its own imperial agenda in the region.

But oil is only part of the picture. Other natural resources loom large, including control of Iraq's huge rivers and the fresh water resources of the region.

A U.S. occupation of Iraq or the installation of a pliant pro-U.S. regime would allow the U.S. to shift its major military forces away from an increasingly unreliable Saudi Arabian ruling class. It would put pressure on neighboring Iran. And a pro-U.S. Iraq would serve as a launching pad for political and economic "reordering" in the region.

Politically, the U.S. power structure wants to develop more dependable ruling elites with broader bases of support in the middle classes. This is especially so in countries like Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt – where the influence of anti-American, Islamic-fundamentalist forces is quite strong. Economically, the U.S. ruling class wants to batter down barriers to penetration and control by corporate capital. It wants to modernize the social and economic conditions for capitalist exploitation in these countries. From this perspective, a "restructured" pro-U.S. Iraq would serve as a testing ground and model for restructuring elsewhere.

The overthrow of Saddam would also aid Israel,

- 1) The moves the U.S. is making in the world flow from a "grand strategy." This grand strategy (the Bush Doctrine) is an attempt by U.S. imperialism to restructure international power relations and geopolitical realities in key regions of the world to its long-term advantage.
- 2) To understand this grand strategy, we have to go back to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the effect this had on world politics and world economics.
- 3) There are four interconnected elements to this grand strategy.
 - a) U.S. imperialism is seeking to make permanent its military-political-economic superiority over potential rivals; to prevent any potential rival or adversary from building up forces to match or surpass those of the U.S.; and to reassert its global dominance in relation to other imperialisms and regional powers.
 - b) U.S. imperialism is operating according to a new military doctrine of preemption: of launching attacks and waging wars before there is any provocation or threat to it.
 - c) U.S. imperialism is seeking to impose new forms

of control and governance in the Third World.

- d) U.S. imperialism is breaking out of the restraints of international laws, institutions, and alliances.
- 4) Right now Iraq is a major focus and stepping stone of this grand strategy. In Iraq, there is a coming together of regional and international interests of empire.

- 5) U.S. imperialism is on a roll. But the Bush doctrine and what the U.S. is setting in motion are fraught with contradictions and uncertainties. The people must act to bring about a different political alignment, one that can stop this juggernaut.

BACKDROP: THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE U.S. AS SOLE SUPERPOWER IN THE WORLD

To understand what is going on, we have to go back a decade or so. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990-91 marked a sea-change in international relations.

From the mid-1970s until 1991, world politics was deeply shaped by the rivalry between the U.S.-led and Soviet-led imperialist blocs. The Soviet Union had

on going to war against Iraq. In Iraq, there is a strategic convergence of regional and international interests of U.S. imperialism.

The U.S. is not going into Iraq because Iraq may possess weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. intends to oust Saddam Hussein fundamentally for other reasons. The U.S.'s aim is to impose its will and authority over the people and resources of Iraq and to turn Iraq into a platform from which to reshape political and economic relations in the Middle East. To underscore the scope of its ambition, the U.S. has floated out that it is prepared to occupy Iraq, for years if necessary, and to install a U.S. military administration under General Tommy Franks.

Clearly, oil is a goal here. Iraq's oil reserves are the second largest in the world (and Iraq and Saudi Arabia together account for close to 50 percent of the world's proven oil reserves). A direct U.S. beachhead in the heart of the Middle Eastern oilfields would have enormous regional and international implications. It would radically affect the internal politics of OPEC. It would give the U.S. a freer hand to alter arrangements with other oil-producing states of the region. And control over Iraqi oilfields would strengthen U.S. leverage over Western Europe and Japan, which rely heavily on Middle Eastern oil. A direct U.S. presence would also

not want inspectors learning too much about its military-biological laboratories and programs – which of course is the height of hypocrisy since this is the demand the U.S. is making on Iraq.

With respect to military alliances and cooperation with other powers, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld has famously set down that the U.S. will enter into coalitions when that is possible and serves the effectiveness of military action – but will not be deterred from its agenda of conquest by alliance relations or international bodies like the United Nations: “the mission determines the coalition.”

The U.S. is formulating a doctrine of empire that declares that the rest of the world has limited sovereignty, and countries may even lose their sovereignty to U.S. interference if the U.S. so decides. Meanwhile the U.S. has unlimited global sovereignty to act against other states. It can exempt itself from international agreements and treaties when that suits it, or ram through UN resolutions when that best serves U.S. interests.

IRAQ AS PRIZE AND STEPPING STONE

This “grand strategy” that I am talking about is at play in Iraq. It is part of the reason that the U.S. is so intent

been a socialist society. But in the mid-1950s a new bourgeois class came to power and restored capitalism and set out to build an empire. The Soviet Union emerged as a superpower competitor, with comparable military capability, to the U.S. The global rivalry between the two superpowers was leading towards war in the 1980s.

But with the collapse of the Soviet empire – and the U.S. pummeling of Iraq in 1991, and their display of raw power in the region, was a factor in that collapse – the U.S. was now the sole superpower in the world. No other imperial power could match the combined military, economic, and political strength of the U.S. No other power was in a position to mount a sustained global challenge to U.S. imperialism. Never before in history has military power been so disproportionately concentrated in the hands of one state.

This was the situation as the first Bush presidency was ending and the Clinton team was taking over. Now during the Clinton years, various ruling class “think-tanks” and policy planners were arguing that U.S. imperialism under Clinton was not capitalizing on the new situation.

Clinton, it should be noted, was doing nothing other than advancing the global interests of U.S. Imperial-

ism. But in the eyes of a certain grouping within the U.S. ruling class, things were not right. Bob Avakian characterizes their thinking this way: "Look, we had this great victory in the Cold War. Then we had this whole period when we had Clinton in there, and we didn't really take advantage of the victory in the Cold War. We didn't 'roll up' the whole world the way we could have, and should have. We let things drift, and it's time to get in there and follow up the victory of the Cold War with this whole new world realignment that we're going to bludgeon into being." (*The New Situation and the Great Challenges*.)

As these ruling-class forces read the situation, and their thinking was first formulated in a 1992 briefing paper titled the Defense Planning Guidance draft, the U.S. should have pursued a more aggressive post-Cold War strategy. It should be using its military, political, and economic strengths to reshape the world in ways that would entrench the U.S. as the dominant world power through the 21st century.

The ruling-class forces that have been pushing for a new post-Cold War strategy are now in command. They are the heart of the Bush foreign policy team – people like Vice President Cheney, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, and Condoleezza Rice, the National Security Adviser. Secretary of State Colin Powell is a key archi-

imperialists are seeking to restructure neocolonial rule, to tighten their rule. And they are speaking a more openly colonial language. They are talking about global military action and direct and long-term military occupation to bring order, stability, and "civilizing norms" to "failed states" and societies that are "breeding grounds for terrorism."

Fourth, this is a strategy of breaking out of the constraints of international treaties, institutions, and alliances.

The U.S. does not want to be hemmed in by international laws and agreements (even those it helped craft). It does not want its freedom of action limited in any way.

Already, the U.S. has removed itself from the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty and the Kyoto Protocol on global warming. It has opposed the International Criminal Court and forced the United Nations Security Council to give it temporary immunity from the UN's jurisdiction in punishing war crimes. It has refused to honor the Geneva convention on the treatment of POWs – since that would interfere with its denial of rights and mistreatment of prisoners at Guantánamo in Cuba. It has rejected verification measures for the Biological Weapons Convention, since the U.S. does

is formally independent but effectively under the economic, political, and military control of imperialism.

The political and military structures of the dependent neocolonial state are under great strain. The alliances of local exploiting and privileged classes that serve imperialism are under great strain.

In a country like Pakistan, the neocolonial state is highly centralized, with the military running things, but this state is driven by competing power centers. In Saudi Arabia, the royal family networks and the secret police are the glue of power – but the narrow base of rule is fueling anti-Americanism even among sections of the upper strata of business owners and technocrats. In Latin America, savage austerity and adjustment programs ordered by the IMF, rampant corruption, the flight of capital out of these countries, and the economic ruin of sections of the middle classes have created problems of governability in many countries. In much of Africa, the end of the Cold War (and with it a “declining interest” of imperialism in aiding client régimes) and economic crisis have produced great instability.

Imperialism’s mechanisms of control in the Third World have grown shakier and more unreliable. Under the signboard of the war on terrorism, the U.S.

tect of the U.S. “bully on the block” strategy. And they have forged a certain consensus within the U.S. ruling class around an aggressive course of global action.

Listen to Condoleezza Rice: “The international system has been in flux since the collapse of Soviet power. Now it is possible – indeed probable – that that transition is coming to an end. If that is right, then this is a period not just of grave danger, but of enormous opportunity.” These ruling class forces see opportunity in the current balance of world power, which gives the U.S. more freedom to impose its will. They see an opening to radically change the political landscape in the Middle East, now that the Soviet Union is out of the picture.

But these ruling class forces also believe that the U.S. must act decisively – because this favorable moment may pass.

9/11 created a new mix of necessity and opportunity for U.S. imperialism. The attack may have been a case of “blowback.” The U.S. had organized, financed, and armed reactionary fundamentalist forces as part of its efforts to oust the Soviets from Afghanistan and weaken it elsewhere. But angered by the Persian Gulf war and the U.S. presence in the Middle East, these forces have turned on their U.S. sponsors.

9/11 presented U.S. imperialism with a certain necessity. As the world's dominant power, it had to hit back, and hit with a vengeance – to let the world know that the U.S. would not tolerate any such acts against it, especially on its home soil. At the same time, the events of 9/11 presented the ruling class with a political-ideological opening: they would cast their quest for global dominance as a “war on terrorism.”

A NEW HEGEMONISM* IN PURSUIT OF EMPIRE

The U.S. imperialists are setting out to restructure international relations. What is this restructuring about? It's about the balance of power among the imperialists, spheres of influence, the restructuring of military alliances, trade relations, and forms of control in the Third World. The U.S. imperialists are operating according to a global calculus and agenda. Their aim is to impose a new world order that will secure U.S. dominance through the 21st century – a new world order that will even more starkly serve the interests of the U.S. empire. We can identify four key elements of this “grand strategy.”

“When I speak of hegemony, what I am referring to is the dominant position and the leading-directing role of an imperialist state in the world imperialist system. This dominance is exercised over the world market, the international state system, and the military order. The U.S. ruling class is seeking to enforce a new hegemonism over the world system.

Third, this “grand strategy” involves a global onslaught against the Third World and the imposition of new forms of control.

The U.S. is threatening to carry out “regime change” in the Third World. This is not about democratization—it's about taking out regimes that defy U.S. authority, that stand in the way of U.S. designs in strategic regions. Iraq and Iran are singled out because they stand in the way of an even tighter U.S. grip on the Persian Gulf and because the U.S. wants to carry out big changes in the Middle East.

At the same time, the U.S. is facing a larger problem of control and governance in the Third World. As a result, the U.S. is not just seeking “regime change” (putting new folks in charge) but a certain kind of “regime transformation” as well. Let me explain.

Economically and socially, there is great and growing instability in much of the Third World – as imperialist globalization, wrenching turns of the world economy, and chaotic urbanization tear at economic structures and the social fabric.

Politically, there is a growing crisis of the neocolonial state. The neocolonial state is an instrument of neocolonialism: a form of colonialism in which a country

possess, or want to possess, weapons of mass destruction – and these are grounds for preemptive attack. The U.S. will determine what the potential threats might be and how they will be dealt with.

Now throughout its history, the United States has invaded and attacked other countries when it saw fit. But what's new is this: the U.S. is threatening preemption on a global scale and declaring that preemption will be a norm of U.S. conduct. The U.S. is saying that it has the right to attack and destroy anywhere on this planet it wills – without even the pretext of a provocation.

Preemption requires the ability to strike quickly and anywhere. This doctrine is served by continuing innovations in war-fighting: expanded air- and sea-lift capabilities to rapidly move troops and armor; further advances in satellite and computer-guided bombing and missile systems, and in electronic communications and reconnaissance; and further development and deployment of special operations forces. The Bush administration is spending a quarter trillion dollars over the next five years to upgrade such capabilities, which are very much targeted for regions of the Third World.

First, this grand strategy's starting point is an overriding commitment to make permanent U.S. military and economic superiority over potential rivals and to reassert U.S. hegemony and dominance in the world imperialist system.

The U.S. is taking more aggressive measures to pre-serve its position as an unrivalled superpower. It wants to prevent any imperial power – in Western Europe, Russia, Japan – or possible coalition of imperial powers and regional powers, like China, from challenging its interests in strategic regions of the world and from gaining the ability to challenge its position as the dominant power of the world capitalist system. It aims to prevent the emergence of what is called a "peer competitor."

In pursuit of this goal, the U.S. is seeking to widen its military-technology lead. It is committing to a permanent arms race in order to prevent any power from building up forces to match it, and to threaten potential rivals and to crush any forces that it regards as hostile to its global interests.

At the same time, the U.S. is seeking to keep other imperialist powers in more subordinate and restricted junior-partner positions: a coalition of the coerced. Here we can look at Western Europe and Japan.

The U.S.-led political-military alliance with Western Europe is under strain. Economic rivalries and economic tensions between the U.S. and Western Europe are growing. And there has been a trend of these other powers to go more their own way. The U.S. is using the "war on terrorism" to reshape NATO (the U.S.-Western European military alliance that the U.S. leads) and the whole U.S.-led military-security framework that these imperialisms have operated in.

The U.S. is both strong-arming and cajoling other imperialisms. We see this at work in how the U.S. has been pressuring France and Germany into supporting the assault on Iraq – making it clear that they will be cut out of the spoils of war in Iraq, especially any post-Saddam oil deals, if they do not endorse and join in action.

The U.S. is also reasserting its great power interests in East Asia. East Asia is the most rapidly developing source of superexploitable labor in the world and the center of world manufacturing. There are large oil reserves in the South China Sea. The United States, Japan, Russia, and China are jockeying for position in this region. Japan in particular has been seeking to forge an economic bloc in East Asia under its leadership. China, even though it is dominated by

imperialism, has become a major East Asian regional power with growing influence.

The threats to North Korea and its inclusion in Bush's "axis of evil" have to be seen in this light. On the one hand, the U.S. is threatening North Korea, telling it that the U.S. is calling the shots on the Korean peninsula and that no regime can defy American power and dictates. But the U.S. is also sending an indirect warning to Japanese imperialism about who's on top in the region, and telling China that it must keep within the U.S. orbit.

Second, this "grand strategy" calls for the pre-emptive use of force to forge a new world order.

In Bush's speech at West Point in June of 2002 and in the National Security Strategy document released in October, the administration announced a new doctrine of preemption.

Preemption means you strike first, to beat someone to the punch who is planning to strike you. But the U.S. is taking this to a new level. It is giving itself the right to attack countries and forces before any hostile actions have been taken, before any threats have been made, before any threats have presented themselves as major problems. All the U.S. has to do is to allege that a country harbors terrorists or that it might